

small salt *akwakvár*. They then go out into the garden and eat their scones in silence in the dark, at the same time entreating *Lòmilaš* to bestow upon them a happy married life. Whoever finds the "stake of happiness" in his or her scone must celebrate this stroke of luck by giving a party for all the participants. On the following day the *Lòmilaš* party is given at the house of the lucky one. After consuming the little *akwakvár* all go back into the house and sit down to a supper which is also an occasion for gaiety. In order to maintain the feeling of thirst at its strongest, no one is allowed to drink anything. The Abkhassians believe that the thirsty person will be given a drink by the one with whom he or she is fated to share conjugal life. In such manner do the young people of Abkhassia tell their fortunes.¹

II. AMSHAP'

In this chapter I have collected together all those rites grouped around the festival of Easter, called in Abkhassian *Amshap'*.² The *Amshap'* celebrations began³ two weeks before Easter Sunday, and continued for exactly three weeks, during which time custom forbade working in the field, except in the cotton field and the kitchen garden. On Sunday, two weeks before Easter Day, the Abkhassians decorated their houses with the first spring flowers, and this Sunday is called *aioba*, which is derived, probably, from the Megrelian *aia*, violet. Until *aioba*, playing football or other games was forbidden. After that day, however, seasonal games were in full swing. Dressed in their finest attire, the whole population gave themselves up to public sports. Among the most popular pastimes were football, wrestling, stone throwing, trick-riding, dancing, singing, and *akyabir* (in Geo. *riktap'ela*, "game of skittles," according to Tchubinashvili's or Tchubinov's Dictionary).

The following Sunday—Palm Sunday—the Abkhassians call *beioba* (a "Megrelianization"). The name is derived from *a-bais*, a yellow flower which grows profusely in the fields of Abkhassia in the early spring.⁴ On this day also the Abkhassians decorated their houses with flowers, particularly with *abala*.

[77] ¹ *Anasp'a dse* has its double in Guria and Imeret'i *bedis-keri*, cracknel of fate, which is known also to the Tifis Armenians. I think the Pahav *dsadsola* arose on this ground.

[79] ² It is, in my opinion, a compound word, consisting of *amsa*, day, and *ap'* (*yap'a*), accepted, appointed, fixed; *Amshap'* thus denotes "pre-ordained day" (Geo. *mighebuli dge*).

[78] ³ These celebrations are no longer observed; they are traditional, and I am describing them from memory, or from the words of the Commission.

⁴ According to Tchubinashvili (Tchubinov), and to R. Erist'avi (Eristov), *beis* is crow-foot, *saxnuculus*. Erist'avi, considering the word to be Megrelo-Imero-Gurian, gives as its K'art'lijan equivalent *tskhviris-satekhela*. The word *a-bala*, in Abkhassian *a-máriká*, is, according to the botanists of the Sukhum Botanical Garden, the equivalent of the Russian *lyutik isakhi*.